



The President's Daily Brief

8 February 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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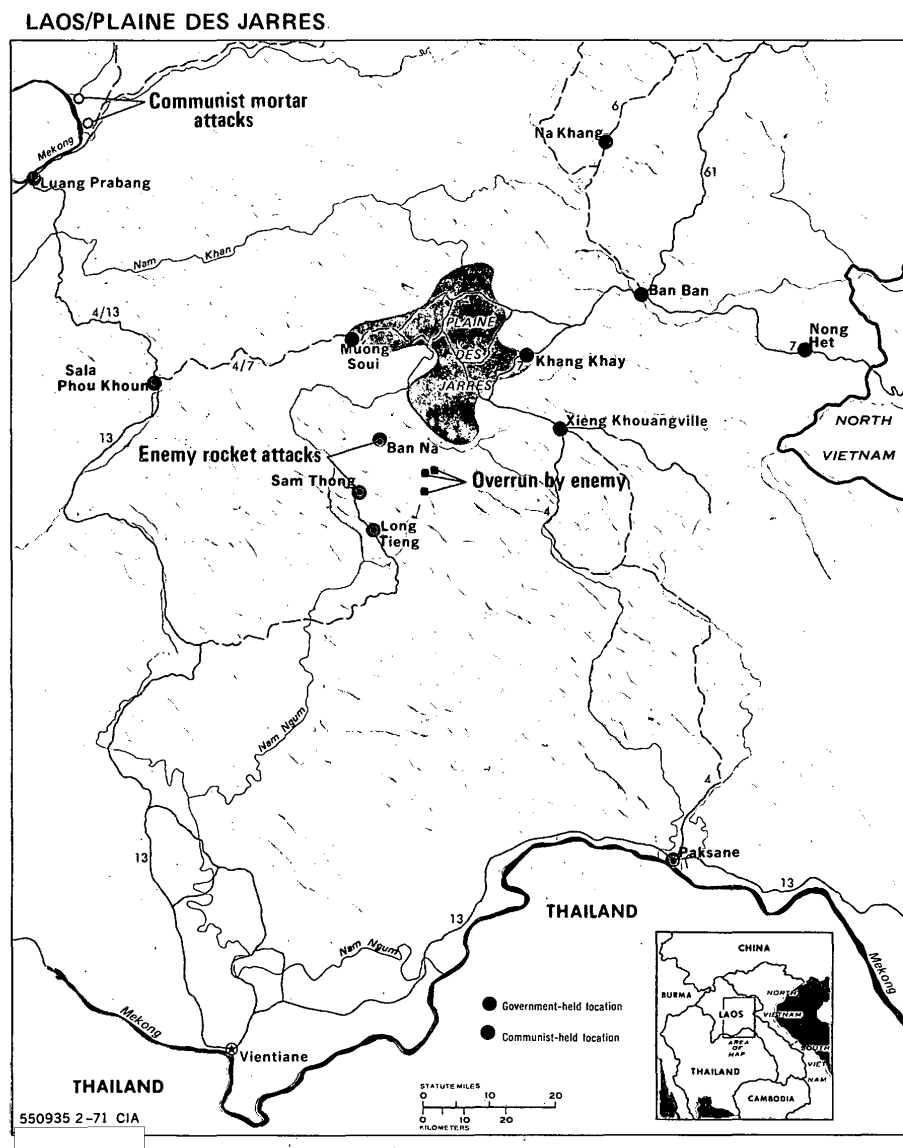
PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In northern Laos, the Communists have seized three outposts guarding the eastern approaches to Long Tieng, and are continuing their buildup in the area. (Page 1)

For the second time in recent days, the Moscow press has commented on specific SALT issues in dispute, this time criticizing the US attitude on an initial ABM-only agreement. (Page 2)

On Page 3 we assess the meeting of the Polish central committee held this past weekend.

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LAOS

Communist units yesterday overran three government irregular outposts guarding the eastern approaches to the base at Long Tieng. The commander of one of these positions--a mobile group headquarters about nine miles northeast of Long Tieng--was killed. A fourth position in the area is surrounded while some others northwest and northeast of Ban Na have also been attacked. Both Ban Na and Sam Thong have been the target of rocket attacks in the last two days.

While the precise timing of any Communist drives southwest of the Plaine des Jarres is not yet clear, the continued buildup of forces in the area indicates that the Communists plan to follow up their recent attacks.

[redacted] elements of the 174th Regiment of the NVA 316th Division reflect continuing combat preparations. In addition, [redacted]

[redacted] elements of two regiments of the 312th Division are in the general area of Ban Na.

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The Communists have continued to harass a number of government positions northeast of Luang Prabang with mortar fire, but have caused little recent damage or casualties. Government artillery fire, which can be heard in the royal capital, is keeping local residents on edge and producing a rash of rumors about Communist intentions.

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Vientiane has already been put on a semialert status, largely as a precaution against possible sapper attacks.

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USSR-SALT

An Izvestiya article on Saturday used Western press reporting on Ambassador Smith's remarks last week before a congressional committee as a peg to criticize the US attitude toward an initial ABM-only agreement. Izvestiya claimed that Smith's audience was "puzzled by his extremely negative approach to such a practical step." The article charged that Smith was trying to prejudice the views of those American legislators and scientists who favor an ABM-only agreement. Izvestiya labeled this a "rather peculiar situation."

As discussed in The President's Daily Brief of 4 February, earlier last week an article in Pravda on forward-based systems broke the USSR's public silence on contentious SALT issues. The articles show a new determination to increase pressures for concessions from the US, and are likely to be followed by further propaganda attacks leading up to the renewal of talks on 15 March.

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POLAND

Gierek used the long-delayed party central committee session held over the weekend to explain and assign blame for past errors and to chart a general course for the immediate future. The clique surrounding Gomulka and his already ousted politburo associates, economic czar Boleslaw Jaszczuk and ideologist Zenon Kliszko, were tagged with responsibility for conditions that led up to the December upheaval. Jaszczuk and Kliszko were stripped of their central committee membership, and the hospitalized Gomulka suspended. Two others were dropped from the politburo, with no replacements announced. Further changes may be in the offing.

In a brief sketch of the months ahead in his closing speech, Gierek advocated strengthening the features that have characterized his seven weeks of rule, including greater popular participation in government at all levels, a continuing direct dialogue with the workers, a rejuvenation of the trade unions, and a greater role for parliament. However, he appeared determined to make clear that the leading role of the party is not to be challenged.

In sum, the plenum has given the Polish people a general promise that the party will consider new political and economic measures but little hope of any more immediate relief. Gierek is trying to convince them that a new start has been made without opening doors that could lead to an erosion of party control over the country.

The next step will come with the party congress--to be advanced from next year when previously scheduled, although no date is yet set. Gierek will use that session to install more of his own men in the central committee and possibly to gain endorsement for more fundamental policy moves.

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NOTE

North Vietnam: Reports are circulating in Hanoi that Truong Chinh, the second-ranking member of the party hierarchy, is either seriously ill or dead. Chinh, who only recently returned from his second trip in two and a half years to East Germany for medical treatment, has not been seen publicly since 26 January and was conspicuously missing from the round of official appearances normally made by top leaders during the Tet holidays. While Hanoi's leaders appear in agreement on the need to respond to the demands of the broadened Indochina conflict, Chinh's death or incapacitation would remove a figure who has at times questioned the regime's heavy priority to the war effort in relation to domestic considerations.

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